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Mr. Harding and the Navy

THOSE who are finding discomfort in Mr. Harding's statement that the American Navy must be maintained because they see in his remark a death blow to the hopes for a naval holiday are, we think, a bit premature in their judgment.

It is probable that there has been considerable misunderstanding of the meaning of a naval holiday. Undoubtedly there are many who have thought of it as a period of disarmament which would usher in an era when all the fighting craft of the world would be allowed to rust to pieces. In reality, of course, it has meant nothing of the sort. All that is suggested by the term is that the great nations of the world take a vacation in their navy yards; that they shut up shop and for an agreed period of time build no more warships. It is not suggested that the present navy be allowed to go to pieces any more rapidly than is occasioned by the normal rate of depreciation of fighting ships.

There is nothing in Mr. Harding's words, as reported by the press, which indicates that the President-elect is opposed to the curtailment of the present naval building plans. Indeed, Mr. Harding has indicated on previous occasions that he will sympathize with an equitable plan for the elimination of all competitive naval building programs. He has called into conference both Representative Butler and Representative Kelley of the Naval Committee. He is in possession of all the data on the comparative strength of the navies of the world. He knows exactly what it is going to cost this country to continue building ships at the present rate and present prices. He is likewise fully informed concerning the attitude of the country, as reflected by the press, for there have been few occasions when the newspapers were so united as they are in support of the proposal to cease naval building.

Under these conditions it is difficult to believe that Mr. Harding has determined to support the big navy enthusiasts. It is much more just to take him at his word and to believe that he meant exactly what he said when he expressed himself in favor of maintaining the navy, than to attempt to distort this statement into the announcement of a policy favoring an enormous increase in the navy. It is much more just and far more comfortable to take him at his word and accept the statement that he stands for the maintenance of the navy than to twist this into an announcement of a policy favoring a great "increase" in the navy. There is a vast difference between maintenance and increase.

Congress Does Its Spring Planting

IT IS estimated that the appropriation necessary to supply members of Congress with free seeds this year will total \$360,000, or \$120,000 more than the last distribution.

Just why these should be known as "free" seeds is a nice question and will bear considerable explaining, but in view of the larger question of why Congressmen should distribute seeds at all, it will probably be well to pass up a debate over this matter of terminology and get down to the more important one of taxes.

The facts are that the distribution of seeds by members of Congress is a wasteful and needless practice. The seeds go to hundreds of thousands of persons who do not want them, will not use them and who merely throw them away. Like the seeds of the sower of the

parable, some fall by the wayside and are eaten by the fowls, some fall on stony places and wither away, and some fall among thorns and are choked.

Some Congressmen refuse to have anything to do with this travesty. They will send seeds upon request but not otherwise. The majority, however, consider seeds excellent campaign propaganda and use all they can get.

The public, which hears a great deal about economy and listens to a great many promises that public funds will be wisely administered, cannot but wonder why the distribution of seeds is not turned over to the Department of Agriculture where it can be handled intelligently.

Is it because these seeds are for votes and not for crops?

Mostly Fools

"THERE are several hundred millions of people in this world," once asserted Sir Bulwer-Lytton, "mostly fools." At first blush one is apt indignantly to refute this statement, but if we consider it in the right light, perhaps, after all, there is some truth in what he says.

The term "fool" is not here used in the sense of an idiot or imbecile, but is applied to the person who does something which is contrary to the laws of common sense and custom. An educated man, brilliant in his profession and looked up to by his associates, may at the same time be a fool.

A famous poet, whose verses and sonnets have gone down the years loved and remembered by millions of his fellows, came under the characterization of Lytton when he gave up the mastery of his senses to strong drink.

A writer of the same age was a fool when he allowed his brain to become so clouded and blurred through the use of opium, that he could no longer give to the world the great thoughts of a great mind.

The annals of history are filled with the tales of men and women who, while honored and believed in, through some act of indiscretion, some giving way to a secret sin, some stepping aside from the path of probity for a time, have fallen from the pedestal on which they were placed, divested themselves of the adoration of their fellows and become fools.

We see them all around us. We come in contact with them every day. We say sometimes in contempt, sometimes in pity, "He is a great man, but what a fool he has made of himself." A paradox, but true. But in our criticism of others let us not forget that perhaps we ourselves may be in the same boat. Which one of us can truthfully say, "I have never been a fool"?

When we contemplate the foolishness of mankind, it does seem as if Sir Bulwer was right when he asserted that the people of the world were "mostly fools," and the Bard of Avon when he said, "What fools we mortals be."

But out of the gloom which this reflection casts, there comes a ray of light. There are thousands of men and women throughout the ages whom the people of their time have characterized as fools, whose "foolishness" has made a bigger and better and brighter world.

When the Christian martyrs gave up their bodies to be torn by wild beasts rather than recant their beliefs, the people called them fools. When they allowed themselves to be burned at the stake for conscience' sake, "fool" was the title that was bestowed upon them.

When Columbus set sail on his voyage to discover and gain a new world, the people of Spain derided him and called him a fool, and when he at first returned unsuccessful, but determined to try again they thought him more of a fool than ever.

When Field proposed to span the Atlantic with a cable and transmit messages under the sea, thousands called him a fool.

When Abraham Lincoln signed the Proclamation of Emancipation striking the shackles from the arms of a million slaves, other millions of his countrymen said he was a fool to do such an act.

Many men and women who have dared to do something contrary to the dictates of custom, have been called fools by their day and generation. The man who refuses a business contract because it savors of dishonesty; the girl who declines to get married because she believes she should care for her parents; the preacher who remains in his present charge because he can do more good there, rather than take another church at a higher salary, all are thought to be fools by many people.

But it is this kind of fools that make a bigger and brighter and better world for the rest of us.

Long may their foolishness continue!

Freeing the Dinner Pail

EVER since President Roosevelt determined that the conditions in the big meat packing houses of the United States were such that government inspection was necessary and took steps to have such a law written on the statute books of this country, there has been a state of war between the Federal Government and the leading representatives of the packing industry. True, it has not always been active warfare, but there has never been more than a temporary lull.

That controversy, lasting over a long term of years, appears to be approaching a decision, for with the action of the Senate in passing the bill providing for Federal regulation of the packers, the forces of the government have administered to the packers a most decisive defeat.

There appears to be less doubt that the measure will pass the House than there was that it would succeed in the Senate so that, if the exigencies of politics are at all favorable, the present session will witness the conclusion of what has been one of the most bitter struggles between corporate wealth and public interests since the dawn of the era when private privileges were first made to square with the people's rights.

The present measure provides for a live stock commission of three members, appointed by the President, the duty of which is to exercise general supervision over the packing industry with all its related activities, such as stockyards, commission houses and other agencies, and to gather and distribute information of value. The commission will also have the right to examine the books of the packing companies when it deems such action necessary. While the bill does not go quite so far as was originally proposed, it is a very broad measure. Without providing for government control, it institutes government regulation. The commission will not fix prices, but it will be in a position to guard the public against overcharge because it will have access constantly to accurate information concerning profits, and through its ability to make conditions public will be sufficiently well armed to be the terror of profiteers.

The Federal Trade Commission, in the course of an investigation ordered by the President, discovered that the packing industry had spread out until it threatened to control the food of the American people. It discovered that the packers had gone into the cereal, fruit and fish business and that they were threatening to drive existing wholesale grocery concerns out of the field. Further, it reported that "it takes no imagination to see that in 10 or 12 years we will witness the disappearance of the retail grocers in a very great measure as independently operated business." The only conclusion which the commission could draw in such a case was that Congress must make up its mind whether it thought it wise to permit any industry to stand at the intersection of the crossroads of supply and demand and there to exercise the right to say whether or not the food of the country should be freely gathered and offered for sale under competitive conditions.

One result of this investigation was the order to the packers to divest themselves of all interests outside those directly related to the purchase, preparation, distribution and sale of meat and meat products. The second is the action of the Senate in passing the regulatory measure. Between the two it seems that there is about to be returned to the average citizen his right to be the dictator of his own dinner table.

Pictures and Prohibition

THERE are probably very few who will attempt to deny that the saloonkeeper was responsible largely for prohibition. He overstepped the laws so frequently and was so conspicuous as a leader of organized evil that society finally wiped out his trade to be rid of him.

The motion picture producers who are serving up cheap sex stories and who are crowding the market with these wares until it is hard to find a picture house that does not flaunt suggestive lithographs, are due to go the way of the saloonkeeper. The public will tire of their salaciousness and the result will be the passage of censorship laws of such severity that the picture business will have to be rebuilt.

The liquor business never listened to warnings until too late. It made the mistake of thinking that the only people who favored cleanliness were the people it sneered at as "reformers." It forgot that a man does not need to be a reformer to be a decent citizen. One can expect little, however, of the type that dominates motion picture producing today, save perhaps the few who, like Griffith with his "Way Down East," gauge the people's desires correctly.